1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

ones. This situation was reported by Magyar, when he wrote, 'Quibanda (should be Civanda) to the east has 500 villages. The Chief has great power. He sends tribute every year to the king of Bailundu but is himself fully independent.'[1] Magyar described about 15 *atumbu* or '*ovikandscho*',[2] as he called them, of Bailundu. He estimated the population of Bailundu at 450,000, and for all the kingdoms of the Ovimbundu 1,200,000,[3] figures which are probably not very different from present-day facts. The report and description of the 'Capitania de Benguella' in 1799 said that the king of Bailundu dominated 2,056 villages; the king of Viye, 886; and the king of Ngalangi, 900; and listed their 'feudos' respectively as 82, 54, and 78.[4] My list of the Ngalangi *atumbu* shows 112. In Bailundu about 20 *atumbu* were ruled by members of the royal family, including heirs apparent or expectant, and the queen (*Inakulu*), who also had her own establishment.[5] About 20 were ruled by other court officials.

Most of these *atumbu* are still recognized as such or as *olombala*.[6] Their decay has not been as great as that of the *ombala*[6] of their liege lord, for they still fulfil certain functions in native life. They have also been given new functions by the administrative authorities. The minor chiefs as well as village headmen are all required to assist in assessing and collecting the native tax, and also in recruiting labour for government works and for contracts. In some areas they receive in return the remission of their own taxes. In some areas they are required to wear uniforms. On the dancing floors of most of these minor *olombala* courts are still held, justice determined, and (to a limited extent) fines 'eaten'. Such judgements are not officially recognized or allowed by the European authorities. The African, however, often finds that European courts do not meet his needs or accord with his concepts of justice.

[1] Magyar, op. cit., p. 389.

[2] Umbundu *ovikanjo* (plural), 'branches', a term which through commercial or European influence is applied to the *atumbu*.

[3] For these figures and for descriptions of the several kingdoms, see Magyar, op. cit., chap. ix.

[4] *Annaes Mar. e Col.*, 4a Ser., pp. 155 ff.

[5] Magyar, op. cit., p. 390.

[6] *Olombala*, plural of *ombala*, a capital village or chief's residence.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

The Village

Among the Ovimbundu the outstanding social and political unit at the present time is the village (*imbo*, plural *ovaimbo*). The village may consist of from 5 to 500 households,[1] the heads of which are in the great majority of cases related to each other in the male line. Each village has a headman or elder (*sekulu*, literally 'grandfather' or 'elder father') who is literally, according to Umbundu kinship usage, the patriarch of the villagers. He was formerly responsible for his village to the sub-chief, and through him to the king. At the present time, the administrative authorities hold the village headmen responsible for matters relating to taxes, labour recruiting, &c. The present decay of this office and of village life varies very greatly from region to region. Nearly everywhere matters of purely local concern are not directly interfered with, and the headman continues his patriarchal government, assisted by a council of all (male) householders.

Ngendo, a typical village. The village of Ngendo lies at about 14° 40′ east, 11° 40′ south, about thirty-five miles south-west of the Keve, where that river crosses the fifteenth parallel, and about sixty miles in a direct line from the Atlantic Ocean. Its altitude is about 1,650 metres, and the ground on which it is built slopes down to a small stream of the Keve system. Directly across the stream to the north rises the granite outcrop on which may be seen the ruined fortress of Usengo. Ngendo belongs to the tribe of Kasongi, *etumbu* of Ekongo. It is about fifteen miles north-west of the administrative post of Cassongue and about two miles from the motor road which connects that post and points farther inland with the district capital and port of Novo Redondo.

The most striking feature of this village is the fact that it consists of four smaller units or wards (*ovitawila*, plural), each of which appears to be quite self-contained. The four together make up the village (*imbo*), which name is also applied to either of the two larger units by themselves. Each unit has its own elder, but

[1] Most, but not all, of the larger villages are *olombala* (q.v., *supra*), but even these are not as large now as they formerly were. In 1850 the *ombala* of Bailundu was said to have 5,000 inhabitants (Magyar, op. cit.). At the present time there is probably no village with more than 3,000 inhabitants, and few of that size. The tendency seems to be toward smaller villages, and there is even some movement toward isolated households and farmsteads after the fashion of so many of the Southern Bantu.

1: Childs M-5 (1824-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

The Village Headman

622 The village headman (*Sekulu yimbo*) is in a very real sense the father of the villagers. Considering their relationship to him as shown by the survey of Ngendo, it is no surprise to find that to nearly all of the householders the headman is quite literally either 'father' (*tate*) or 'elder brother' (*kota*). The headman is literally the patriarch. He is also therefore the village priest. His com-
[769] pound is the only one in the village which has a spirit hut (*etambo*). In this hut the elder prays to ancestral spirits and holds communion (*oku felevela*) with them. In case of need, he may spend an entire night or more so occupied, but he will often offer a prayer when he awakens during the night. This hut is also used as a store-room for possessions not used every day and here are kept the insignia of office. The elder may sleep in this hut at any time when he is not sleeping with one of his wives, and here also he may lodge respected guests.

622 The headman functions as a Justice of the Peace for the village.
692 The graver and more difficult cases are heard before the whole village on the dance-floor, while the simpler ones which require the attendance only of those concerned, together with their respective elders, are taken up either in the *onjango* or in the headman's own courtyard. Through all and in spite of all political and administrative changes, the village court of justice continues and will continue to function.

622 It is evident from the above that a headman may have much or
554 little to do in attending to the affairs of his village, depending on several factors, such as the number of the villagers, their attitudes and disposition toward each other, relations with neighbouring villages, the demands made upon the village by the authorities, &c. However numerous may be his 'official duties', he will still find some time to attend to his own affairs, whether he be a farmer, a hunter, or a trader. In former times and before he became village headman, Sikilile was a trader and caravan leader (*ofumbelo*, Portuguese: *pombeiro*), and made many trips to the regions of Ngangela. As a headman he returned to farming and although he seemed to be quite old at the time of my visits, he had a creditable little plot of tobacco. It may be of interest to note that only the headman may speak of the village as 'my village' (*imbo liange*). The heads of the little wards may speak thus possessively only of

1: Childs M-S (1926-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 18

their own wards, 'my ward' (*ocitanda cange*). The other villagers will speak only of 'our village' (*imbo lietu*).

There are, in general, two quite different and distinct types of Umbundu village according to the terrain on which they are built. The villages of the plains have room to spread out and tend toward a circular shape, with the dancing floor and men's club house near the centre. The wards may appear as quarters of a single whole or they may be added on in haphazard fashion. The villages of the mountains must conform to the possibilities of the terrain. Formerly, many villages were built on mountains for defence, and capital villages of this type may still be seen with the houses built on ledges and rocks almost one on top of the other. In this type of village, there is often not sufficient or sufficiently good soil for even small garden plots within the palisades. Occasionally one of these mountain villages may be found which has not even room within it for the dancing floor, which will in this case be found outside the palisade. If the site is not too severely confined, the wards of the mountain village tend either to string themselves out horizontally along the mountain-side, or to find successive ledges. The village of Ngendo is of an intermediate type, built as it is, on a slope. Sikilile's village was first built as near the stream as possible. The wards later added themselves on, each a little higher than the one before. The school village, which was built last, got the highest and most hygienic site.

Moving a Village

Villages may be moved for any one of several reasons. When fields are worn out and others are not available[1] near by, a village may be moved to a site more conveniently located. More often, however, the reason assigned is that there has been much illness or death, that the old site is polluted, that its 'air is bad', which to the Ovimbundu means that some action displeasing to the spirits has been committed which has brought on these misfortunes. This will generally have been determined by divination, as will also the spirits' consent to the proposed new site. A site which has long been occupied is of course fertile soil. Since old sites are generally cultivated to good advantage this fact should not be overlooked as a possible additional reason for moving.

[1] Nowadays European settlement often pre-empts such lands.

2: McCulloch
● 622, 643

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/For ceremonial activities of the village headman and chief see 793./

611 dispersed. Both groups have ritual leaders, whose offices are quite dis-
613 tinct. Barnes' suggestion[1] is that the two groups must be father's patrilineage and mother's matrilineage, with the qualification mentioned below.

613 The *oluse* consists of a large number of village groups, some of which
● 622 recognise mutual relationship,[2] but with no recognised head (other than the village headmen) except in the case of the royal families. Land is
[428] owned by the *oluse* and passed on within it from father to son, or from elder to younger brother. Succession to village or tribal office, from village headman to king, descends in the same way.[3] Ritual leadership
[346] within the *oluse* lies with the village headman, who is in charge of the spirit-hut *(etambo)* of the guardian spirit of the village (or of the nuclear *oluse* within the village), and who officiates at regular village worship, including agricultural festivals.

613 The *oluina*, on the other hand, is a dispersed and apparently larger
428 group, whose members live with their various paternal lines of descent. The size of the *oluina* is unknown; Childs merely refers to it as a "large
604 and widespread organization, with a recognized head". The office of head of the *oluina (ukulu wepata)* descends from mother's brother to sister's son. Negotiable and moveable property, including cattle and trade goods, is owned by the *oluina* and inherited by the sister's son. Formerly the mother's elder brother had great powers over his sister's sons, and was even able to pawn them or sell them into slavery, to meet his own debts.
[592] The patrilocal household is usually responsible for training children, es-
[586] pecially during their early years, but they are frequently sent to the *oluina* (i.e. to the mother's brother) for at least a part of their education. At death or divorce of parents, children go to the *oluina*.

43 The head *(ukulu wepata)* of the *oluina* is usually both the legal and
782 spiritual head of the group, although today the two functions are often divided. He is in charge of the spirit hut *(etambo)* of the guardian spirit of the *oluina* (of whom there may be more than one, and of whom he becomes one after death). He leads the *oluina* in propitiatory rituals carried out in case of illness, death, or other misfortunes within the group, or in prayers made for desired economic advantages. (Apparently no regular rituals are carried out by the *oluina*.) The *ukulu wepata* may or may not be at the same time a village headman; if he is, he will be priest of two lines and have charge of two spirit huts; if he is not, there may be two (or more) priests in the village, each in charge of the spirit-hut of his *oluse* or *oluina*.

The onẽlẽ yohonji and the onẽlẽ yohumba

613 The *oluse* and the *oluina* are both divided into male and female
602 "sides": the *onẽlẽ yohonji* (the side of the bow) and the *onẽlẽ yohumba* (the side of the basket). It has been noted above that uterine brothers
582 and sisters belong to the same *oluse* and *oluina*, but to the male or female side in each, according to sex. The composition of these "sides" is

(1) Loc.cit.
(2) If some villages within the *oluse* cannot trace mutual relationship, the *oluse* should perhaps be called a patri-clan rather than a patrilineage.
(3) But see below, p.29.

121 Ngendo is surrounded by a stick palisade except on that side of the headman's household which is adjacent to the rocks used as a club-house. The village itself (and each section) is divided up into compounds, each of which contains one to three houses,(1) and palisades divide one compound [343] from the next; between are paths leading to the *ocila* and out of the village. Small gardens for tobacco, maize and beans are within the compounds, and the larger fields lie outside the village at from thirty minutes' to an hour's walk. In the headman's section of Ngendo there are 25 households containing 32 houses in all. Each house has its own granary [343] *(ositla)* and a small chicken-coop built on stilts, and of all the houses only six have separate kitchens *(ocimo)*. Most households had separate pens for pigs, goats and sheep for the night,(2) and at one side of the headman's compound there is a common corral for the nine cattle owned by the section. Only the headman had a spirit-hut *(etambo)*, used also as a [122] storehouse, for entertaining his guests, and for his own use should he wish to sleep apart from his wives.

121 Chiefs' villages or *olombala* (singular *ombala*) are often surrounded by
361 a belt of tall trees.(3) The chief's compound (the *iloabe*) is larger than
643 those of other villagers, and, according to Hambly,(4) usually contains: the chief's house, which always has a separate sleeping-room; a house and a kitchen for each of his wives; a tomb for the burial of the chief and his wives; a house of meditation for the chief, and pens for pigs and chickens.

342 Umbundu houses are usually circular, but sometimes rectangular, and made of wattle and daub, with thatched roofs. Sometimes huts are divided by matting into a living-room and a sleeping-room. Cooking is often done [343] in the house itself, but sometimes a separate hut is built as a kitchen.(5)

345 The *onjango* (the Men's Club House) consists of a cone-shaped roof set on stout hardwood poles instead of a wall, and left open so that those for whom there may be no place inside may still see and hear what takes place within.(6)

361 Villages are moved when fields are exhausted and others are not avail-
[768] able nearby(7) or, more often, when there has been illness or death in the village, which implies that some action displeasing to the spirits has been committed. (No information is available concerning the usual length
776 of life of a village.) When the new site is chosen, the headman's fire
774 in the old village is extinguished, and a procession starts, led by a boy
796 carrying the sacred bows *(ohonji)* of each ascendant who is now a guardian spirit of the family (i.e. the *oluse*), and a girl carrying the sacred chest *(ocimbangu)* containing the relics *(ociye)* and the balls of iguana skin.(8) On arriving at the site the boy and girl cut and plant the

(1) In this section there were 13 goats, 20 sheep, 100 pigs and about 300 chickens. (Childs, op.cit. p.31) (2) Ibid.
(3) Hambly, (2) 1934, p.206 *et.al.* It was a custom of the Ngangela peoples to plant trees round the village and dedicate them to deceased chiefs. (See McCulloch 1950, p.68.) There is no evidence that the trees surrounding Umbundu villages have any ritual significance, although the custom may have been taken over from the conquered Ngangela peoples.
(4) Op.cit., p.208. (5) Ibid., p.10
(6) Childs, personal communication.
(7) Due often to European settlement. (8) See below, p.47.

621 The total number of households is 44, or 48 including those of the four
592 section heads. It should be noted that there is a discrepancy in Child's
114 figures (apart from an obvious misprint):(1) in another context he writes that section B contains only 12 houses (not even *households*), while from this table it would appear that section B has 15 household heads, including that of the section head; and section C is said to have 6 households, while only 4 (again counting the section head) are accounted for in this table.

591 Childs states(2) that the incidence of patrilocal marriage in Ngendo
114 is fairly typical of Umbundu country, but unfortunately gives little information regarding the relationship of the various spouses to each other or concerning the location of the villages from which they came. Matrilocal marriage is recognised as a possibility: of the three relatives by marriage listed above, one was a husband of a daughter of the headman, another the widow of a younger brother of the headman, who should have been inherited by a younger brother (?) or a mother's brother of the deceased, or, failing that, could have returned to her father's village. Of those listed above as sisters' children, two were widows who had come to live in the village with their mother's brothers.(3)

POLITICAL STRUCTURE

The village headman(4)

622 The village headman *(sekulu yimbo)* is also the head of the *oluse*
793 which forms the nucleus of the village group, and is related agnatically to most of the householders. He alone may speak of the village as *imbo*
782 *liange* (my village); the heads of sections, who are also called *sekulu*(5) may speak possessively only of their own sections *(ocitiwila cange)*, and other villagers speak only of "our village" *(imbo lietu)*.(6) The headman functions as both priest and legal head of the village. As priest he has in his compound the *etambo* (spirit hut), in which the insignia of office are kept, and in which he prays to the ancestral spirits. Upon occasion he may sleep there, usually offering a prayer to the spirits when he wakes during the night. The *etambo* may also be
[34L] used as a lodging place for respected guests, or as a store-house for possessions not used every day. Childs states that he officiates at regular village worship, including agricultural festivals; Hambly adds that he may lead the people in offering sacrifices when epidemics of
613 sickness break out in the village. It has been noted above(7) that it is the function of the *oluina* head to lead such rituals when illness occurs within the *oluina*. In general the village head is responsible for
[622] matters - particularly agriculture and public health - which affect the whole village; individuals, both for protection and for help and other

(1) Childs, op.cit., p.28, line 27, where "twenty-four" should read "forty-four".
(2) On the basis of the 192 genealogies and 74 marriage-schedules which he collected. He does not, unfortunately, give examples or show how the comparison was made.
(3) Based on Childs, op.cit., pp.25-31.
(4) This section is based on Childs, op.cit., pp.36-7.
(5) It has been noted above that *sekulu* is used for all men (and some women) of the grandfather's generation.
(6) op.cit., p.283. (7) p.18.

29

613

advancement, will go to the head of their *oluina* to ask for his intercession with the spirits.(1)

622 ● 623 691

As legal head of the village, the *sekulu yimbo* presides over both the more serious cases, which are held before the whole village on the dance-floor, and the simpler ones, which require the attendance only of those concerned, together with their respective elders, and may be taken up either in the *onjango* or in the headman's own courtyard. Hambly seems to suggest that all the section-heads act with the village headman as a kind of council, but does not give details. He states also that the *olosekulu* (sing. *sekulu*) of the village formerly had charge of trials for murder, theft, adultery, and arguments over land,(2) and points out that they were more active in the legal system than the chiefs.(3) This is even more true today, when the village court of justice continues to function in spite of political and administrative changes, although the offices of chiefs and to some extent of sub-chiefs have largely decayed. [177]

622 423 651 466 [463]

Other functions of the village headman include: the distribution of land to the various families when new village sites are opened;(4) the direction of the communal fire-hunts;(5) and, today, the collecting of taxes from the villagers and the direction and organisation of labour to work on the roads.(6) But however numerous the headman's official duties, he usually finds some time to attend to his own affairs, whether he is a farmer, hunter, or trader.(7)

622 643

Succession to headmanship is usually from father to son or from elder to younger brother, "with only as much recognition of primogeniture as belongs to the general ... hierarchy of age."(8) Succession is, however, affected by the "democratic" tendencies in succession to chieftainship.(9)

The Chief (osona or sova)(10)

631 643 [177]

The Ovimbundu are grouped in 22 chiefdoms, of which half were in the past generally tributary to the more powerful chiefs.(11) At the same time each chiefdom had its separate government and could be considered as a unit in itself. Effective European occupation and direct rule have atrophied the chiefly office among the Ovimbundu, until today chiefs survive as little more than "living museum pieces".(12) Childs(13) enumerates the functions of the chiefly office as follows:

643 793 769

(a) *Religious.* The chief's ancestral spirits were the principal chiefdom deities, and the king was high-priest as well as the visible "vice-regent and incarnation" of the spirits.

(1) Childs, personal communication.
(2) The maternal uncle is responsible for settling disputes over property which occur within the *oluina*. (Hambly op.cit., p.200).
(3) Ibid. (4) Ibid.
(5) Cashman, op.cit., p.115. (6) Ibid., p.121.
(7) Childs, op.cit., p.36. (8) Ibid., p.44.
(9) Ibid.
(10) *Osona* means chief or king. *Sona* is the personalised form used with the name. This the Portuguese writers have corrupted into *sova* or *soba*. (Childs, personal communication)
(11) See above, p.2.
(12) Childs, op.cit., p.20. (13) Ibid.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

428 not entitled to inheritance of land, cattle, or anything else belonging to the dead man. The greater part of the property would be bequeathed to the eldest brother of the deceased's mother.

428 604 768 There appears to be discussion as to the distribution of property, but the maternal uncle is responsible for settling disputes. He himself has the first claim, and in Ngonga's words, "If there are quarrels about the cattle, land, and other things, the mother's eldest brother will settle them."

The mother's brother has rights over his sister's children even to the extent of pawning them to pay his own debts. On the other hand the maternal uncle is responsible for the conduct of his sister's children. He would have to pay fines incurred by thefts they committed, and he provides for his sister's son a wife who is either his daughter or his widow.

Ngonga stated that the maternal uncle does not invariably take all the property of a deceased nephew for himself. He may give something to the deceased's mother, the deceased's maternal grandfather, or to a brother of the deceased. Such gifts appear to be the outcome of good will on the part of the dead man's maternal uncle; [421] there is no compulsion. Women never inherit cattle or rights to the use of land.

423 692 622 The king is the head of the legal system, though his activities as such are not so great as those of the village headman (*sekulu*). The *olosekulu* (there are usually more than one) of a village witness the final act in a divorce ceremony. They used to have charge of trials for theft, murder, adultery, likewise the right of settling arguments concerning the ownership of land. It was the *sekulu* who distributed the land to the extended families when a new village site was opened. The maternal uncles settled the minor divisions among the limited families.

643 There are many kings among the Ovimbundu, but I thought that there was a tendency to confuse the titles of *osoma* ("king") and *sekulu* ("headman" or "chief" of a village). The jurisdiction of a king is so well known that any person is able to say under which king he lives. Ngonga said definitely that a man of the Ovimbundu who was under the jurisdiction of a certain king would have to obey the commands of a visiting king, provided they were not in any way disapproved of by the king to whom first allegiance was due.

643 [465] A chief may demand labor for the building of his house or the cultivation of his land. He does not pay for this but usually gives beer to the workers; sometimes he secures the labor and gives nothing in return.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
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for lack of effectiveness following a series of quarrels. His successor was Tjilombo a government headman and the leading personality of the village of Tjisangu. Such, then, is the recent history of Gumba.

2. *Chiefs, Government Headmen, and Traditional Headmen*

I have outlined the succession of chiefs in Gumba, and the villages with which they were associated. I have noted that nowadays there are government headmen as well as the traditional headmen. I wish now to indicate what authority the chiefs and the two sorts of headmen have and how this is related to the villages.

The sub-chiefdom is a recognized administrative unit. The census, and the annual check on the census, are taken on a sub-chiefdom basis, as are the collection of taxes and the recruitment of workers for contract labour, road work, and jobs to be done at the post. The sub-chief and the government headmen have to visit the post once a month. The *chefe de posto* (head of post = District Officer) will normally only visit each sub-chiefdom once a year for the check on the census. He may send orders for the recruitment of labourers or the arrest of an offender by one of the policemen who live at the post. His principal contact with the people comes in the adjudicating of disputes which the people are quite ready to carry to the post—the Bimbe *chefe*, whose area included Gumba, told me that hearing cases was his main occupation. Very few *chefes* have anything more than a smattering of the Umbundu language, and they have only the vaguest knowledge of the culture and social usages—for instance they may be aware of the classificatory extension of kinship terms and the association of leopardskins with chieftancy. The *chefes* are moved about fairly frequently and their names and personalitie tare not known to the people. As the people associate the post with demands for taxes, fines, and labour services, and are only likely to visit the post when recruited as non-voluntary labourers or to have their photographs taken for identity cards, it is not surprising that fear is the predominant emotion they feel towards the *chefe*.

The staff of the post consists of the interpreter, an African

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
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634 with primary and possibly some secondary education, the
648 clerks who have primary schooling, and the policemen, who are often illiterate. The police are locally recruited and are provided with their keep, from the farm attached to the post, and with uniforms. They are usually—by no means always—illiterate. The interpreter, clerks, and police tend to identify themselves with the *chefe* as against the people; however, a policeman may be influenced in his relations with the villagers by gifts and friendship.

634 The size of population of sub-chiefdoms varies. The 1950
161 census gave the total 'non-civilized' population of the Bailundo *concelho* as being 246,045, and the number of sub-chiefdoms as 82,[9] that is, an average of 3,000 individuals per sub-chiefdom. The *chefe* of Bimbe told me in August 1956 that Gumba had 800 taxpayers, and Chicunda had 700. Putting the proportion of taxpayers as 1 to 6 (on the basis of Epalanga proportions) this gives 4,800 as the population figure for Gumba and 4,200 as the figure for Chicunda. Even if the proportion of 1 to 5 be taken as the proportion between taxpayers and total population this gives us 4,000 as the figure for Gumba and 3,500 as the figure for Chicunda. I do not know what the local density of population is; in the Bailundo *concelho* as a whole it is 16–17 individuals per square kilometre.[10]

634 The chief and government headmen are the main channel of
648 conveying demands and orders from the post to the villagers.
● 622 They receive in return the remission of their taxes. Their dependence on the post is not, however, sufficient to give them a position of marked superiority in their locality for the following reasons. They are unable to control all relations between the post and the people; anybody who has a dispute on hand may take it direct to the post. In village life their
634 influence can always be counterbalanced by that of the
622 catechists and 'elders of the school' whose contact with the
[797] missions is much closer than that of the chiefs and government headmen with the post. They also lack economic resources; the exemption from taxes (which the Catholic catechists share)

[9] See Gálvao and Selvagem, pp. 384–5. For Angolan population density see Egerton, pp. 36–37.

[10] My own estimate from figures given by Galvão and Selvagem.

6:Edwards E-1 (1955-1956)1962
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does not give them any claim to financial assistance from the people, or control over natural resources, such as land rights. The only prerogative of this sort that the chief has is the right to the leg of an antelope killed in a hunt or a bull killed in a commemoration rite—and this is of symbolic rather than economic importance.

Nor, finally, does the post give the chiefs prestige and support.[11] Five successive chiefs of Gumba had been deposed by the post, and it is not uncommon for chiefs and government headmen to be beaten or otherwise punished (for instance by being made to work for a fortnight at the post) for their shortcomings. They have in fact just sufficient power to carry out the commands of the *chefe* and to do nothing more. They are not disliked by the local people for doing what the *chefe* tells them to do, but any attempt at dictatorial behaviour on their part will stir up opposition which may lead to their downfall.

The relations between white *chefe* and black chief vary according to individuals and neighbourhoods. Sometimes the *chefe* will allow the chief to be chosen according to tradition; at other times he will impose a candidate of his own. A *chefe* may hear any cases that are brought to the post, or he may delegate the power of hearing minor cases to the chiefs. Some *chefes* will regard the chiefs with hostility as being enemies of their own people; others will abstain under any circumstances from beating a chief, as they feel their power should be supported. Here I describe the situation as it was in Gumba and in Bimbe generally.

A visit to a chief's village in Gumba or elsewhere will give an opportunity of meeting those residents who hold the ministerial titles, of gazing under overshadowing trees at the enclosure in which are kept the skulls of former chiefs, and perhaps of seeing the chief and some of his cronies dance to a drum in commemoration of one of his predecessors. Ministers, skulls, dances, and drum are symbols of chiefly nostalgia rather than of political power. The ceremonies have little interest for the people in general, and many of them have been abandoned by the chief. Lusase's first wife had not, as custom demanded,

[11] For criticism of this policy by two Portuguese with administrative experience see Galvão and Selvagem, p. 213.

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CHIEFS AND HEADMEN IN GUMBA

The tasks of recruiting contract labourers and road-workers and of getting fines and taxes paid, and such other duties as the arranging of compulsory purchase of tickets for the travelling cinema (showing patriotic films) are carried out through a long process of argument, attempted evasion, and pressure, between the chief, the government headmen, and the locally influential people, traditional headmen, catechists, and anyone else who can get himself listened to. Persons actually picked for contract labour or road work may make quite a fuss about it, but as such numbers are recruited it is ultimately accepted resignedly. It is not really practicable for a chief to discriminate in favour of his kinsman owing to the heavy demands for labour and the likelihood of such discrimination being reported at the post, as happened to Simbwyikoka. Demands for labour may fall heavily on some households. Thus one Epalanga household consisted of a man, his daughter by an earlier marriage, his wife and her baby daughter. The man had been taken for contract labour, his wife had been called to road work, and the adolescent daughter was carrying sisal[14] to the post. A kinsman of the household head attempted to arrange for some watch to be kept over the gardens lest animals should get in.

There were four government headmen in Gumba during my stay. Theoretically they are village headmen. The villages in which official records group Ovimbundu do not conform to the actual villages in which Ovimbundu live. Anybody moving from one village to another has to pay a fee; as the Ovimbundu move about quite frequently and no attempt is made to enforce this rule locally, the result is this discrepancy between paper and real villages.

The government headman's duties are those already described for the chief. As with the chief, there is only sufficient backing from the post for him to carry out the orders he receives; he does not receive power to enable him to exercise political leadership and judicial authority at the local level, nor is he a representative of the post in the villages. His interests and values are linked to those of his neighbours rather than to the post. It is through the chief and the government headmen

[14] Some villages are obliged to grow sisal and take it to the post without payment.

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622 that the administration gets labour and money from the villagers, and largely though not exclusively through them that the villagers keep in touch with the post which politically integrates them into Angola and legally provides sanctions which they do not possess. The government headmen do not supervise on behalf of the post the daily life of their fellow-villagers. The government laws—such as the prohibition of beer- and rum-brewing and grass-burning (for hunts)—which if enforced would bring about a certain number of changes in Umbundu social life, are not enforced for many reasons—the administration makes no real attempt to suppress these uses as opposed to levying annual fines[15] per head, the government headmen go in for these customs themselves, and they lack the power to achieve this enforcement. Were the government to introduce policies involving some reorganization of the social life they would need a stronger form of local authority. Under the present circumstances, however, the powers and status of the chief and government headmen are quite consistent with the demands made on them by the post.

622 There were four government headmen in Gumba in 1955–6, Guilherme, Lupassa, Tjilombo (who became chief after the deposition of Lusase), and Walivanga. Guilherme was in 1955 living in Epalanga. Some people thought he should live in Kamupa which had been founded by his mother's brother Lusase—however, when he left Epalanga in 1956 he settled near the Protestant village of Kalungwengwe. His change of residence had been the result of violent quarrels with Paulo and other Epalanga people. Lupassa lived in Katembo, and was a sister's son of Kaluywa, who was the traditional headman. I do not think Lupassa was the dominating personality in Katembo. Tjilombo was on the other hand the leading personality in Tjisangu, many of its people being related to him. Walivanga was similarly linked by kin or affinal ties to the majority of the people of Belem.

The foregoing paragraph raises the question of the relationship of the government headman to the traditional headmen. A man who is both a government headman and a traditional headman is in a fairly strong position in his village; when the

[15] Each fine is about 10–20 escudos (2/6d.–5/-).

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government headman is not the same person as the traditional headman he may become involved in quarrels unless he is careful to accept the position of the traditional headman; and both government headman and traditional headman may find it wise to be on good terms with the catechist and the elder of the school.

It is fairly simple to define the obligations of the government headman. Discussing the position of the traditional headman vague words such as 'influence' and 'prestige' must be used to describe a vague position. Indeed a purely synchronic picture would be inadequate, since the present position of the traditional headmen and the contemporary village organization must be understood against a historical background.

3. *Headmen and Their Villages*

In the time of the rubber trade the village headman was both the leader of a body of agnatic kinsmen and the representative of his village in the wider political system, the village headmen sitting with the chief to judge cases. Both Childs and Hambly emphasize the importance of the judicial role of the village headmen. Childs states that the village headman was also a ritual leader, being responsible for 'regular village worship including agricultural festivals'.[16] I have found no evidence of such ceremonies on a village basis. The only ritual which, according to my older informants, the village headman should perform for his people is communing with his ancestor spirits in the spirit hut during a village hunt, and this information was not confirmed by all my older informants. It may be added that I found no evidence of any installation rite for a new headman.

It may be assumed that a good deal of the old village structure survived till the middle or end of the 1930's. Dr. Childs in his description of the village of Ngendo (Cassongue) as it was in 1935–6 indicated that agnatic kinship was the main principle of village recruitment, and that this was typical of other Umbundu villages.[17] In Gumba it was still possible at this time

[16] Childs, p. 46.

[17] Ibid., pp. 25–37.

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for individuals to build up large villages—thus Simbwyikoka encouraged people to settle at Mwekalia to make it a large village. It may also be suggested that the power of the village headmen was to some extent linked with the power of the chief, since the headmen were associated politically with the chief, and would from this, tend to gain authority in their dealings with their fellow villagers. The village headmen also lacked any real competition from other types of leadership. Mbati had kept relations with the post in his own hands, and there were therefore no government headmen. The first catechist had arrived in Mbati's village in 1928, but cannot have met with much lasting success as there are few baptized Christians over thirty-five in Gumba.

Other factors at the time strengthening the position of the village headmen were the low rate of labour migration[18] and the fact that practically every man over forty at the time of Simbwyikoka's accession had participated in the rubber trade. This meant that many of the best known caravan leaders were still in full vigour, and enjoyed a prestige based on the first-hand knowledge of the middle-aged and older men.

Between this period of the middle thirties and the beginning of my own fieldwork twenty years had passed and many changes had taken place. The status of the chief had sharply declined and he was now assisted by the four government headmen. Every village except the chief's village had a Catholic or Protestant catechist, and there had been a marked trend towards learning catechism in preparation for baptism, which had begun about 1946. Hence the catechetical school was usually attended by the majority of under twenty-five's in the village.

Agnatic kinship had ceased to be the principle of village membership. Nor can it be said that headmen build up villages by getting people to settle at a particular spot. It is not always easy even to find the headman, village population is not very stable, and a man can settle with any category of kin.

To discover the traditional headman required careful phrasing of questions. When I visited a village and asked for the *osekulu yimbo* (the traditional phrase for the village headman) I

[18] Ibid., p. 214.

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might be told that he lived elsewhere. This would turn out to be a reference to the government headman. A request for the *ekulalu* (literally elder father, hence elder or headman) might also bring me in contact with the 'elder of the school', the representative of the local Christians. I therefore began to ask for 'the old one' (*ukulu*), or to inquire 'Who built first?' or 'Who settles disputes?', when I wanted to find out who was the traditional headman.

Even these questions did not necessarily get a clear answer. Thus the village of Kamupa had been founded by Lusase, its government headman was Guilherme, and, as neither of these was living near, minor disputes were referred to two old men who lived in the village. Apart from the government headmen, there are also traditional headmen recognized by the post, who did not have the privileges and the duties of the former. It may happen in a particular village that the man recognized as traditional headman by the post is not the same person as the real traditional headman recognized by the village. This was the case in Epalanga, where Sapapula was unquestionably the headman recognized by the villagers but the duties of dealing with policemen fell to Luanga. In the local discussions as to the recruitment of road-workers, and so on, Sapapula had much more influence than Luanga.

The position of the traditional headman nowadays lacks clearly defined powers, or symbolic value. A village is frequently known by its founder's name. The headman is the only person who can speak of 'my village' as opposed to 'our village'.[19] The firing of the long grass in the dry season which marks the beginning of the great communal hunts is theoretically begun by the village headman, though this is not always adhered to in practice. The headman does not take any active part in leading the hunt, nor are the people who go on a communal hunt necessarily confined to the inhabitants of one village. He has 'to show land' to new-comers to the village. This reflects a moral responsibility to his people rather than control of land tenure, since there is always spare land away from the villages which anybody can cultivate. He also has the responsibility of hearing minor disputes. He receives from the

[19] Ibid., pp. 36–37.

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622 villagers a certain, not very marked, respect, which may be increased by such factors as kinship ties between him and them, and his personal qualities.

621 Nor is the village itself clearly defined as a social unit. It does not possess any corporate rights over fishing and hunting sites, or control access to firewood gathering. A man may hold land in two villages. It is rarely that a village acts or is treated as a unit. The two main occasions on which the village is thus 'represented' are at marriages and in the context of the catechetical school. The party which goes from the bridegroom's village to the bride's represents her village, to the other village; [628] at the wedding feast food is given out on large basket plates, one for each village represented among the guests.

797 The role of the catechetical school as representative of the village as a whole will be discussed in another chapter; here it should be noted that the ceremonial reception of visiting missionaries by the 'school people' of the village has been evidently copied to some extent from the welcome given to the bridegroom's party, and this has in turn copied certain features from the welcoming of missionaries—notably the use of speeches in Portuguese.

361 The hamlets[20] and isolated households do not indicate a modernizing 'individualistic' trend away from village life, since 'conservative' and 'progressive' people are to be found in both units of residence. The Ovimbundu, whether educated or illiterate, when talking about themselves (particularly in comparison with the Kimbundu of Northern Angola) emphasize that they are a village-dwelling people, and for them the real values of village life seem to be the sociability and mutual help that a man living among his kin can enjoy. By settling in a village one indicates where the pull of kinship ties is strongest rather than any particular allegiance to the village headman.

621 829

[20] I use this term for a settlement with less than four households.

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582 their marriage also fits a general pattern of Umbundu marriage,
621 a choice made within a limited range joining together individuals of different kinship cores.

The multiplication of ties and their concentration within a neighbourhood by this means do not prevent a man from having kin and affines a day or two's journey away. It has earlier been indicated that the population of Epalanga was from quite a wide area. Yet the consequences of previous preferential marriages (thus Paulo and Saviel were related both patrilaterally and matrilaterally) and the trend towards the establishment of new marriage ties had created a complicated mesh of linkages that has been described within a not particularly stable village population, whose senior residents had been there for only ten years. To use again the anthropological metaphor of kinship as a network, the network can have odd strings running out quite a way, but in a village the different ties will be bound up in a knot.

602 The long-range ties (with such obvious exceptions as those
166 with kin living in cities) are not the result of the range of kin spreading wider and wider under modern conditions. The evidence of pedigrees indicates that kinship and marriage links between individuals in, and actual migration to and from Gumba and Cassongue, Cela, and Namba, date back well into the nineteenth century. There is far less evidence of connections and migration between Gumba and areas to the south and east. This geographical aspect of social relations persists at the present day.

621 It has been indicated that the high proportion of preferential marriages creates a certain local stability, since many marriages are with people living close to. Yet the basic stability lies not so much in the relative stability of a local population, but in the pattern by which links of distant kinship are changed into marriage ties and new bonds are speedily established among the fortuitously assembled population of a new village.

4. *Headmen and Kinship Cores*

622 I now turn to the other principle of village integration, the settling of individuals near senior kinsmen. In the previous

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chapter I have indicated that the position of headman is today a somewhat shadowy one, and that the headman emerges rather than succeeds by virtue of various grounds; the main ones being official recognition, some tie to the local chief, the presence of a core of one's kinsmen, a claim to be the first resident, and personality. During my stay Sapapula was as much a headman of Epalanga as anyone can reasonably be these days, yet his position had not always gone unchallenged.

In 1954 he had found himself in danger of being displaced by his matrilateral 'brother' Mwehombo. Both men, apparently, claimed that they had founded the village, both had substantial cores of kinsfolk in the village, and both possessed strong personalities. Sapapula by holding the ministerial title of Epalanga to Kafelo had had a stronger position in village affairs. This prop to his power was taken away when Kafelo was deposed from the chiefdom, and Luanga and Mwehombo purchased the title of Epalanga from Lusase.

In this partnership Mwehombo must have been the leading personality, Luanga being extremely amiable but not at all domineering or energetic. Mwehombo's idea was presumably to establish himself as recognized headman of Epalanga, and to obtain whatever advantages were to be gained from an association with Lusase. Luanga's aim, from what he told me, was to escape contract labour by having a position as a traditional headman and title-holder. Titles will still be sought after, although the substance of power has gone, so long as they can confer some prestige or protection from administrative labour demands. It was not customary for the role of Epalanga to be held by two people jointly.

Mwehombo died shortly after this. He had been baptized by the name of Simon when dying on January 13th 1955, when his social personality began its posthumous career. At the inquest, which was held according to the old Umbundu pattern in which the corpse suspended in a hammock from a pole held by two men was supposed to answer questions by the way it swung, it was found that Mwehombo had suffered the proverbial fate of the sorcerer in being killed by the spirit he had used to kill others.

The role of the questioner was taken by Paulo, sister's son to

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neighbourhood and will explain his choice of residence by quoting the names of one or more of these; yet the weaving together of so many strands of kinship and affinity, ultimately through marriage links, is what gives the local population its relative degree of stability. It should be emphasized that the integration established within a village by the network of kinship and affinal ties is dependent on the integration created by the same amorphous network which runs through and beyond the sub-chiefdom. It is this network into which the individual is woven by multiple ties that absorbs the neo-matrilineal pull apparent to some degree in choice of residence and keeps the system essentially cognatic.

The use of the word *familia* reflects this situation. A man may say of a particular senior kinsman 'He is my *familia*', that is, my kinsman, my most important kinsman with whom I have settled, yet also he may say 'My *familia* is in Cela', that is, the greater part of my kinsmen live in Cela. When Bartolomeu explained that he had settled where he did because of Lusase, he was perhaps combining the two kinds of references. He had settled in Gumba because he had a large number of kinsmen there among whom Lusase was pre-eminent. A man explaining the locality of his *familia* in the wider sense will associate it with a particular sub-chiefdom—'My family is all in Menga'—when he is outside it; when he is in it he is more likely to refer to a particular village.

Although individuals living in a village may have come there through several kinship sources yet the majority of them will probably have some kinship or affinal tie with the traditional headman. This collection of individual ties does not provide the headman with a body of followers, nor is having a large number of dependants a value of contemporary Umbundu culture. If it were felt that the best thing to be in life is the patron of a body of kinsmen and followers, headmanship would survive as a predominant influence in local life despite the collapse of its political and legal responsibilities. In fact not even old men feel this way.

The idea of the village as a corporate group with a jural and political personality rather than a residential unit has not survived the break-up of agnatic solidarity, the disappearance

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of the men's house, and the headman's loss of status. The new institution of the catechetical school does not revive village solidarity in this form. The contemporary Ovimbundu do not live in a 'village headman society' comparable to those of British Central Africa,[13] since the concept and manifestations of village solidarity around a headman are so notably deficient. Reference may also be made to the economic ethics of the Ovimbundu with their approval of making money and the belief that all loans even within the circle of the elementary family should be repaid, that is, wealth is seen by all as an end in itself rather than a means of obtaining personal loyalties.

In the previous chapter it was shown how the traditional headmanship is no longer a significant legal and political institution. In this chapter I have tried to indicate that it lacks sources of authority and prestige within the village.

The line of argument has involved reference to the contemporary kinship system of which an outline has been given. This will be more fully discussed in later chapters, when a more detailed comparison of present institutions with the traditional kinship system will be made.

[13] For an example of these societies see J. C. Mitchell, *The Yao Village*, Manchester 1956.

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with anthropological knowledge and interests, Dr. Daniel A. Hastings and Dr. Gladwyn Murray Childs, have written on Umbundu kinship.[3] Mr. Hambly's main interest was in material culture and the conditions of his fieldwork were not such as to give him much evidence on the kinship system.[4] Both Dr. Hastings and Dr. Childs recognized the central importance of kinship in Umbundu social life, but have outlined the kinship ties and kinship groups rather than given a detailed analysis.

602 Mr. Hambly states that 'The phrase *Epata Lia Tate* (or *Oluse*) means "family of my father" and includes all relatives on the father's side. The words *Epata Lia Mai* (or *Oluina*) mean "family of my mother".'[5] This could mean that the Umbundu kinship system is bilateral. He states that inheritance is matrilineal and marriage virilocal, a situation consistent with such a matrilineal kinship system as that of the Bakongo.[6]

613 622 Dr. Hastings, whose thesis was completed the year before the publication of Hambly's book, makes it clear that there are two sets of kin groups. 'Over each village is a ruling elder who is the head of the kinship group of that village since all who reside in the village are generally related to him and to each other patrilineally. This elder, greatly revered, is considered the patriarch of that local group. Residence being patrilocal, [591] the office of an elder is hereditary through the male line.'[7] He 613 then goes on to contrast with this, 'the matrilineal sib to which each member is linked, though he may be living in a village away from his sib group.'[8] This group is a clearly defined

[3] Works cited in footnotes to Chapter I. There is a typescript of Hastings's thesis in the library of the International African Institute, London.

[4] Mr. Hambly spent five months in the country, and used as his interpreter and main informant an English-speaking Otjimbundu. He seems simply to have visited villages without living in them. Dr. Childs and Dr. Hastings had both spent several years as 'bush' missionaries. Dr. Childs had actually taken over from Dr. Hastings work in the area to the north-west of Bailundo in the direction of Bimbe, and had subsequently obtained information in Cassongue. He later obtained a good deal of material from African pastors, teachers and schoolboys.

[5] Hambly, pp. 191–2.

[6] For the Bakongo see the discussion by A. I. Richards, in Radcliffe-Brown and Forde, pp. 213–21. Anthropologists have more than once suggested to the author that the Umbundu system was not of the 'double-descent' category but some combination of virilocal marriage and matrilineal descent.

[7] Hastings, p. 16.

[8] Ibid.

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[1874-1911]

A man did not eat or chat with his eldest son or his daughters. Nor did a woman eat or chat with her sons. By 'chatting' I mean a prolonged conversation. It was not forbidden for people in these relationships to speak to one another. Nor could a man eat or joke with his sister (although chatting was permitted) or be alone with her at night. A grown man could not sleep in the same room as his father, except perhaps on a journey, nor could he wear his father's clothes while he was still alive. A grown woman might sleep in the same room as her mother, provided they were far apart.

The reason for these avoidances is usually given simply as 'shame' (*osoi*) although I have also heard it said in explanation of the father-eldest son avoidance 'If you don't have an eldest son you can't have a family', that is, it is the birth of his eldest son which gives a man status as a father. There seems to be no formalized norm of behaviour towards the *Kwasula*, but it is said that the youngest child is the parent's favourite.[19] When I asked what would happen if a man was alone with his mother at night the answer given was, 'Your father would be angry.'

It is evident that these avoidances would limit the role of the elementary family as an associational unit. This was further 575 limited by the institution of the men's house in which the men and boys from the age of seven or so upwards eat together. In this way, a boy was associated from childhood with the body of agnatic kinsmen from whose conversation he received much of his education in matters ranging from table manners to history.

593 The authority of a man over his grown sons does not seem to have been very marked. A father had first claim on the services of his adolescent son in the caravan trade; if his father did not need him a lad could travel with another kinsman and a grown man could trade on his own account. Nor did a father apparently control his son's access to land, since this was allocated by [623] the village headman. There was, however, one very important service a father could perform for his son, that of ransoming him when the latter's mother's brother wished to sell him as a

[19] I am not sure if the *kwasula* is the youngest child, either male or female, or the youngest child provided that he is male. I think the latter.

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elder of the school in the sense that there is no sphere where their duties overlap and where they must compete.

The roles of government headmen and of officials of the school are complementary. It is through the chief and the government headman that the Ovimbundu pay their taxes and fines, are recruited as contract labourers and are called to road service, are arrested for crimes and misdemeanours and are entered on official records. It is through the catechists and elders of the school that the Ovimbundu find the expression of village unity by which at the same time they are linked to the whites and to the rest of the world on the religious level. The missions bring the Ovimbundu closer to the whites than does the administration, without the administration's predominant interest in making demands.[5]

While at the level of the total Angolan political system the administration is more powerful than the missions, the position of the catechist or elder of the school is stronger at the local level because the catechist and the elder represent the catechetical school which is the only social grouping existing on a village basis, whereas the government headman in fact represents no social group but is simply an executant of the orders of the *chefe*. Hence the catechist owing to this representative role and to his contact with the mission (which is much closer than that of the government headman) can lead the people and invoke the aid of the mission against abuses on the part of chiefs or government headmen. This would not be the case if the post gave firm backing to its local agents and turned a deaf ear to communications from the missions. Opposition to an overbearing government headman is then likely to be led by the leaders of the 'school', who can count on the backing of the mission, if they have a good case, to intervene for them at the post. The relative importance in a village of the catechist and elder of the school varies according to such factors as personality. The way in which the catechist was ignored when he tried to intervene in the dispute over the bridewealth shows that the catechist cannot claim authority in disputes as a matter of course.

[5] The missions impose fees and a yearly levy on their adherents which are small compared to the official taxes.

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SOCIAL CONTROL

The transformation of the dispute between Guilherme and Paulo into what amounted to both a trial of, and an uprising against, the government headman is not purely accidental but is a natural consequence of the principle latent in the social organization by which the 'school' leaders complement and can check the chief and government headman.

The case also indicates the limited nature of their roles. Both Paulo (by preventing Anna's marriage) and Guilherme (by getting Francisco sent to contract labour) can strike at the other through the lawful exercise of their authority; any real attack on the other's position involves an appeal to either mission or post, and hence brings about a trial of some sort. Guilherme finding that the quasi-trial before the priest went against him, tried to bring the case before the post, but realizing that this also was likely to go against him came to terms with his enemies. That is, any determined attempt to solve a dispute is likely to involve at least the threat of a reference to the post or the mission.

The power of the priest to intervene in the actions of the agents of the post is limited. Thus Antonio Pires did not intervene in the case of Francisco but advised him to get a letter from his employer. It is, however, notable that the missionaries are not simply appealed to by Catholics. Protestants like Jeremias and Luciano, and pagans like Kasosi and Sapapula, were ready to appeal to the priest although the initiative came from Paulo. That this is so is a convincing argument for the claim which has been made that the catechetical school represents the whole village, although it could also be claimed that it reflects rather an aspect of 'civilized'-native relations in the total Angolan system, clientship, as the typical form of relations between the two groups, with the missions being the patrons *par excellence* to whom all natives are at least potentially clients. The general well-being of all natives is the concern of the missions, who are therefore liable to be appealed to in such cases as this.

In particular cases where there is another patron to appeal to his aid will be sought. This patron-client situation will crop up again in the account of subsequent disputes. Its origin historically lies in the history of attitudes to employees and to

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mission to give Sapapula's case, and, as things worked out, it was the anthropologist who was made the 'civilized' focus for the opposition to Lusase as Antonio Pires had been made the focus of the opposition to Guilherme. Lusase, like Guilherme, reacted by saying that he owed allegiance only to the *chefe de posto*, and running off to the post.

Luanga's case shows how desire to get out of contract labour may give a new reason for taking a ministerial title, and also once again how sending someone to contract labour is regarded as a means of injuring those whom one dislikes.

I have spoken of the conflict between Lusase and Sapapula as being a conflict between a chief and his people, and this is true in so far as it shows how opposition forms against a chief and how he can be checked. It is therefore of importance as indicating the position of the chief in the contemporary social system. The people themselves interpreted the dispute as being essentially one between individuals—Lusase's behaviour was attributed to his lust for Nahoka, and Gregorio entered the dispute not as the ruler of the neighbouring chiefdom of Menga but as a friend of Sapapula. The interpretation of what is a political conflict as a quarrel between individuals may be explained as being due to the relatively limited nature of the role of chief (Lusase) and of traditional headman (Sapapula) which therefore do not predominate in the social status of the individual. (In this particular case, had I got Lusase's viewpoint he would probably have said that he was defending his dignity as chief, whereas Sapapula did not regard Lusase as being really chief.) The lack of a formal court system or even of an articulated political system at the local level has brought into desuetude the old legal and political idioms and the Ovimbundu have not yet learnt new terms from the Portuguese.

5. *Social Control and Social Structure in the Disputes*

I now return to the points mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. It is hardly necessary to underline the decayed state of the traditional system of authority. Lusase had, at the time of the quarrel between Guilherme and Paulo, expressed his

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intention of staying out of the dispute, just in the same way as he said, when Ndonga's action was reported to him, that he did not know what went on in the villages. That is, Lusase disclaimed any general responsibility for maintaining law and order in the sub-chiefdom. He had turned up at the case before Justino and at the moot by Kapapelo's house, when Nahoka had pointed out that it was he, and not Kafelo, who was effectively chief. The very fact that such a remark could be made indicates a weakness in Lusase's position, and his lack of authority is further illustrated by his being but one of a crowd of would-be conciliators.

It was, indeed, Lusase's position with relation to Kafelo that brought about his quarrel with Sapapula. Lusase, on meeting Kafelo at Kapapelo's, had bowed to him, and must have been uneasily aware that public opinion held that Kafelo 'had finished', had completed the cycle of chiefly rites, whereas Lusase was just 'the *chefe de posto*'s boy'. It is unlikely that there would be among the Ovimbundu developed forms of the situation reported from some colonial areas by which one person acts as chief or headman *vis-à-vis* the government while another is the real chief or headman with effective power over the people, if only because so much of the content of chieftancy today is simply post work. Yet a chief differs from a government headman precisely because of the surviving prestige which clings to the capital village, the skulls of the dead chiefs, the titled ministers, and the drums, and it was such an expression of prestige which Sapapula gave to Kafelo and denied to Lusase. Not surprisingly Lusase reacted to this sharp evidence of the weakness of his position. In acting as he did, he made things worse; since he lacked any local means of imposing his will by force, or mobilizing moral support, he had to fall back on the post.

This weakening of the chieftancy is, of course, only part of the general disintegration of the old social system. Sapapula, in personality and prestige, was the equal of any traditional headman in the neighbourhood, and was consulted by the chief and government headmen when fines or roadworkers were required from Epalanga. Yet it was Paulo and not Sapapula who launched the attack on Guilherme, an attack speedily supported